

INEOS fined after employee seriously injured

INEOS has been fined £400,000 after an employee was seriously injured while carrying out a routine task at its chemicals site in Grangemouth, Scotland.

The worker, 47, was attempting to clear a sump that contained a caustic solution on 25 November 2019. However, he fell into the sump due to inadequate grating and sustained severe burn injuries.

The sump had needed emptying as its contents had reached the high-level design threshold the day before on 24 November.

After laying out various hoses in preparation of emptying the sump, the worker then entered the sump area.



Photo of sump with grating in place taken shortly after the incident

While in the sump area, the worker stepped onto the corner of the grating with his right leg.

The grating however gave way, with the worker's right leg falling into the sump and becoming saturated with the caustic solution. He was submerged in the solution for three seconds before pulling himself out of the sump and was later treated at the burns unit at St John's Hospital in Livingston.

The man sustained permanent scarring to his right leg and was in pain for four weeks following the incident before returning to work in the December.

A Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation into this incident found

INEOS had failed to undertake a risk assessment of the work involved. There was also no safe system of work in place. The grating was not secured and there were no barriers in place to prevent a fall into the sump.



Ejector pump and hoses were placed in the sump area prior to the incident

HSE guidance on risk assessments states employers, or an appointed competent person, must identify hazards before work takes place, before assessing and controlling the risks involved. Findings should then be recorded, with employers then urged to review the control measures they have implemented to ensure they are working. More on this can be found at: [Managing risks and risk assessment at work – Overview -HSE](#)

INEOS Chemicals Grangemouth Limited, of Chapel Lane, Lyndhurst, Hampshire, pleaded guilty to an offence under Section 2(1) and Section 33(1)(a) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £400,000 at Falkirk Sheriff Court on 8 March 2024.

HSE inspector Lindsey Stein said: “The duties on employers to undertake a suitable and sufficient assessment of risks and to provide a safe system of work are absolute within health and safety legislation and well understood. The dangerous properties of caustic are widely known and this incident could so easily have been avoided with the implementation of straightforward control measures identified through assessment.”

Debbie Carroll, who leads on health and safety investigations for the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS), said: “This accident could have been avoided had the risks been recognised and appropriate systems of work put in place in ensuring workers were protected from harm when working in this area.

“Ineos Chemicals Grangemouth Limited’s failure to assess the risks posed resulted in the severe injury and permanent disfigurement of one of their workers.

“This prosecution should remind duty holders that a failure to manage and implement effective measures can have serious consequences and they will be held accountable for this failure.”

Notes to editors:

1. [The Health and Safety Executive](#) (HSE) is Britain’s national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise.
2. More information about the [legislation](#) referred to in this case is available.
3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.